

KOKUA HAWAII ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview About Randy Kalahiki

with wife Annie Kalahiki and daughters Alicia and Rita



Randolph Kalahiki

Photo courtesy of the James Young

Anui Pua “Annie” Kalahiki was the wife of the late Randolph “Randy” Kalahiki, a Windward Oahu community leader who was the executive director of the Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth (KEY) Project. Randy Kalahiki was an advocate of Native Hawaiian rights and also a supporter of the activist group Kokua Hawaii in its struggle against the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians. Alicia Kalahiki Weatherington and Rita Kalahiki were his daughters who often accompanied him to numerous meetings. The interviews with them and his wife “Annie” took place on January 16 and February 17, 2016, at McDonalds and Burger King Restaurant.

GK: When and where were you born?

AnnK: I was born on Papaikou on the Big Island in March 1935.

GK: Who were your parents?

AnnK: Gregorio Edreo and Alice Kaniho. My father was from the Philippines, and my mother was pure Hawaiian and born in Papaikou.

GK: When was Randy born?

AnnK: He was born August 12, 1932.

GK: Where was he born and raised?

AnnK: He was born on Oahu, and I think he was raised in Kalihi.

GK: Where did you meet Randy?

AnnK: I met him at church. It was the Gospel of Salvation on Vineyard Street in Honolulu. He was a member of the church.



As he was working as a community organizer and promoting the preservation of farmlands and island lifestyle, Randy Kalahiki was also developing a deeper understanding of Hawaiian culture through growing taro and other truck crops. In this photograph in 1975, Kalahiki is interviewed by Gary Kubota about the impact of the H-3 Freeway on farming in windward Oahu. As a University of Hawaii student, Kubota produced the independent documentary, *TH-3: A Question Of Direction*, which aired on prime time on Hawaii Public Television. Kalahiki's second oldest daughter Aloma is to the right of the photograph.

Photo courtesy of the James Young family

GK: Where was he working?

AnnK: He was working for Honolulu Iron Works. He was a truck driver. Later, he was a meat cutter for Kahua beef sales.

GK: When did you move to the Windward Oahu side of the island?

AnnK: We moved in the early sixties. His family had property in Kahaluu within walking distance from the KEY (Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth) Project.

GK: What made him help to start the KEY project?

AliciaK: Church people found that on the Windward Oahu side, there was a lot of poverty. A lot of kids were dropping out of school in the sixties, and the drug scene was very prevalent. They were looking for a community leader to help start the KEY Project. They had interviewed dad and said, you may be the ideal person, because daddy was living on the Windward side already. He came from a family of 13. He dropped out of high school in the ninth grade during World War II and sold newspapers. Despite that, he learned a trade.

GK: He applied for the KEY Project job and got it? What was the job?

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AnnK: He was to be an outreach person. He eventually ended up being the executive director for this youth center, getting the kids off of the street and keeping them safe. He did it 24/7.

AliciaK: The Project had a school for high school dropouts in the late 1960s. It was based on a similar native American school on the U.S. mainland. Daddy implemented it, because he loved how the Native American reservation school was teaching their native kids basic things like history, math, science—all to do with what they were doing on their land, like the farming. He had classes in agriculture and horticulture and tied it in with science, math, and English. Daddy felt that the youths would learn best with a hands-on approach.

GK: What other activities did it have?

AliciaK: It was a drop-in center with food tables and ping pong. My dad organized ping pong tournaments. He did camping trips. He made the kids do volunteer work. Yeah. He took the kids to concerts. He took the kids out to things that were not exposed to them, baseball games when the old stadium was around.

GK: And how did he do this?

AliciaK: You know entertainment promoter Tom Moffatt. Moffatt was a good friend of my dad.

My dad would ask uncle Tom Moffatt for concert tickets for the kids but they had to work for it. Sometimes, they had to cut all the grass on that strip of land near the Hygienic Store. The KEY Project started the planting.

GK: They planted the grass?

AliciaK: Yes. So, if you wanted to go to concerts, you signed your name on the clipboard and all those kids who volunteered to do things got to go. It was meant to give back. It was to give the kids a sense of kuleana—responsibility to their community.

GK: Right.

AliciaK: The project also had a weight lifting room. My dad hooked up with St. Francis Hospital so people could become a nurse's aide. He had a surf shop where youths could make surf boards under an instructor. We had another room called the Keyhole Store where the kids got to make their own money by making candles. My dad was able to get grants. He got people to donate money to the Key Project. One of the biggest corporations that helped him was the United Way.

He even had a summer fun program where the kids got to go on field trips, beaches and camping. I remember one summer camp we actually had a lunch truck come out with our breakfast and lunch and dinner.

GK: What else was he involved in?

AliciaK: My father was a grassroots activist, helping groups like Malama Aina O Ko'olau and against the eviction at Waiahole and Waikane. That was his passion. My dad fought for those causes. Those were good times.

GK: What other good times do you recall?

AliciaK: I spent a lot of my good childhood in the Iolekaa Valley where uncle Sammy Lono lived. He was a kahuna lapaau. We lived there. It was my best time from seventh to 11th grade. It's located above a gated Haiku subdivision. Those were fun years of growing up.

GK: That's right. Lono won a landmark case in the 1960s affirming his ahupuaa rights to have access from the mountain to the sea, and the subdivision, which had blocked traditional path, had to provide access.

AliciaK: That's right. So to get to Lono's place, you had to drive through the subdivision past a guard gate and tell the guards you were going to see Lono. I remember those days when we lived there and we would dress up and dad would drive us through guard gate. We'd catch a bus with all the kids and we'd go to school. Coming home, catch a bus, walk home with the kids, walk into the valley. My sister and I would take off our school shoes, put on our rubber boots on and trek it into the valley. Those were fun days.

GK: For a while, Randy was growing some taro over there, too?

AliciaK: Yes, and way up into the valley in the taro patches, we also grew ong choy and watercress. Each of the six kids had our own taro patch. He'd sell the produce at the farmer's market at Kaumakapili Church in Kalihi.

GK: What made him get involved with Kokua Hawaii?

AliciaK: Some Kokua Hawaii members used to come out to the valley where we were living with uncle Sammy Lono. Lono was living on kuleana land above Haiku Plantation. As an outgrowth of his community work, he began growing taro in the valley. A lot of the Kokua Hawaii members were so intrigued with daddy and Uncle Lono. During the visits, they talked about land and water issues.

GK: How did he feel about the evictions in Kalama Valley?

AliciaK: He didn't like what was happening. It had happened before in other places. He knew that if he didn't get involved, other places might be next. That's where his grassroots contact came in.

GK: In what way?

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AliciaK: Dad was a very, very strong Democrat. It went all the way back to Gov. John Burns. John and daddy were very good friends. . . . Daddy and George Ariyoshi, who later became governor, were childhood friends.

GK: Really?

AliciaK: George's father had a laundry business, and George used to come by to my grandmother's house and collect clothes for dry cleaning. My grandmother would send out the whites to be starched and ironed and whatnot.

GK: Interesting, because of course, when it came to the eviction of tenants at Waiahole-Waikane, someone was telling me that Randy and Buddy Ako and some other people were involved in trying to get Gov. Ariyoshi to do something. Ariyoshi eventually had the state buy the 600 acres in Waiahole Valley.

What happened on the day of the arrest of 32 people resisting the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiian in Kalama Valley on May 11, 1971?

AliciaK: He brought uncle Lono with him to Kalama Valley.

RitaK: Dad went there because he was standing up for a cause that he believed in—issues affecting Native Hawaiians and farmers. You had George Santos who was Portuguese and wasn't Hawaiian but George was a farmer. Daddy was a farmer, a taro farmer. No matter how you look at it—a farmer is a farmer. He knew a lot of people in Kalama Valley and he wanted to show his support. He knew the Richards.

GK: As I recall, the police wouldn't arrest Randy or Lono. Lono actually offered both hands saying, "Arrest me, Arrest me!" But the police wouldn't do it. I guess they didn't want to tangle with either one. How did you feel about your father's activism?

RitaK: As children, we thought it was neat. It was interesting being involved in these land issues. It was an education, and eventually, I obtained a college degree in Hawaiian Studies, where I teach these issues to students.

GK: What's their reaction?

RitaK: I tell them, "I lived through that era." But the students today often don't believe it happened that way.

GK: (Laughter) Well, give them a copy of this interview.

GK: When you were growing up, did Randy speak Hawaiian at home?

AliciaK: Dad would tell us he grew up knowing the Hawaiian, but he was not allowed to speak it in school. You got whacked!

AnnK: I got whacked. I had to write a hundred times, "I must speak good English. I must speak good English."

GK: When was that? Where was that?

AnnK: That was on the Big Island in the 1940s after the war. I was in grade school.

AliciaK: Daddy did talk about how he was whacked with a ruler. So, when he went home and his mom would speak in Hawaiian, daddy got really angry at his mom, because he was not allowed to speak it in school, so daddy would always, not shun his mother, but say, "Speak English, because I'm not allowed to speak Hawaiian. Speak English."

GK: How did that change over time?

RitaK: When I was growing up, I wanted to learn the Hawaiian language. Daddy still had that old attitude. Daddy didn't want us to learn the Hawaiian language, because he said, "Why should you? Why should you? No. I don't want you guys learning the language." But his opinion changed over time.

AliciaK: My dad became active in the state Constitutional Convention to make Hawaiian the official language side by side with English. He was active because he realized the language had been taken away from us and had weakened our culture. When Hawaiian immersion opened up here in Kaneohe, my mother asked me a favor. She said, "I'm gonna ask you a favor," and I said, "What mama?" She said, "Would you mind enrolling Kapili," who is my oldest, "in Hawaiian immersion?" I'd contemplated putting the oldest into immersion myself. And she said, "Under one condition. You put Kapili, you make the commitment to put your other two," 'cause I was a mother of three. She said that if I put Kapili in the Hawaiian immersion program, I have to also put the other children in the same program. I put all my children in the Hawaiian immersion program.

GK: What are you doing now?

AliciaK: I'm a site coordinator for the non-profit, childcare provider Kamaaina Kids. I'm proud to have been with them for 17 years. This year makes 18 years. One of the sites is for a Hawaiian language school. My children are Hawaiian language speakers.

GK: How do you feel about this whole revival in the Hawaiian language? How do you think Randy would feel?

RitaK: I think daddy would be proud. Daddy would be proud, because there is pride restored in the culture. Alicia's three children are in the Hawaiian Immersion program. Daddy would be proud just knowing that cultural attitudes have changed.

